



DISCOURAGED/LOW SELF-ESTEEM

SCRIPTURE VERSES (NIV)

Matthew 11:28

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;
⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Galatians 6:9

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

1 Peter 1:6-9

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Hebrews 4:16

¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

2 Timothy 1:7

⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Psalm 139:13-14

¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

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GOD SAYS YOU'RE WORTH BEING FOUND

Rick Warren

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NLT)

Some people believe calling someone spiritually lost is a put-down. But it's not. It's actually a great compliment to be called spiritually lost. There's a difference between losing something and misplacing something. If I misplace something, it means it wasn't important to me. But if I lose it, it's valuable enough for me to try to find it. You misplace a bobby pin; you lose your glasses.

People are only lost if they're worth finding. Think of it this way: The value of a masterpiece doesn't go down when it's lost; it goes up.

Human beings lose a lot when they aren't connected to God. We lose our direction, God's protection, our potential, our happiness, and our future home in Heaven — just to name a few. But there's one thing we don't lose: our value.

God loved you enough to send his very best — Jesus. The most famous verse in the Bible says, *“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16 NLT).

You matter so much to God that he underwent a rescue mission to come get you. He came to Earth as a little baby so that one day he could die on a wooden cross for your sin.

Talk It Over

- ◆ How does the way you look at the spiritually lost compare to the way God sees them?
- ◆ What difference does John 3:16 make in your life?
- ◆ Who in your life is spiritually lost and needs to understand his or her value to God? How will you reach out to that person this week?

GOD, WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?

Rick Warren — April 10, 2017

“We don’t know everything, and our prophecies are not complete . Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don’t know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understand us” (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12 CEV).

In his pain and despair, Job asked a lot of legitimate questions: *“Why let people go on living in misery? Why give light to those in grief”* (Job 3:20 GNT).

This “why” question is human nature, and we all ask it. We have this misconception that if we understand the reason behind our pain, then it will make the pain easier.

You don’t need an explanation; you need strength. You don’t need an explanation; you need a Savior. You don’t need an explanation; you need comfort and support.

But we always go looking for an explanation! We ask questions like, “Why did that person walk out of my life? Why did he make a promise to me and then break it? Why did he hurt me? Why did I lose my job? Why did she die? Why did I get sick?”

Friends, I’ve been studying the “why” question for years, and I’m going to give you my educated answer: I don’t know. And I’m never going to know, because I’m not God. And neither are you! Some things we’re just never going to understand until we get to the other side of death. Then it’s all going to become very, very clear. Only God knows. And if you don’t get his answer right off the bat, you might as well stop asking “Why?” because you’re simply prolonging the pain.

Proverbs 25:2a says, *“It is God’s privilege to conceal things”* (TLB). God is a God of revelation. He reveals himself through nature, circumstances, and Scripture. The only reason you know anything about God is because he has chosen to reveal himself.

But the Bible says God doesn’t just reveal; God also conceals. And sometimes God intentionally hides his face from us. Why? So we’ll learn to trust him and to live by faith rather than by our feelings.

God doesn’t owe you an explanation for anything. God doesn’t have to check in with you first before he does something. God doesn’t have to get your permission before he allows things to happen in life. God is God, and we’re not always going to understand why some things happen.

The Bible says, *“We don’t know everything, and our prophecies are not complete . . . Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror. Later we will see him face to face. We don’t know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understand us”* (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12 CEV).

One day it’s all going to be clear. It’s all going to make sense. You’re going to be able to say, “So that’s why God allowed that in my life!” Until then, God wants you to trust him.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What are some questions you need to put in the “Ask God When I Get to Heaven” file?
- ◆ How does letting go of your “why” questions increase your faith?
- ◆ How can you encourage someone today who has been questioning God and wondering why God allowed something to happen in his or her life?
- ◆ Talk about this statement: I do not have to understand everything in order to_ do what God tells me to do.

WHY IS LIFE SO HARD?

Rick Warren

“All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own.” (Isaiah 53:6 NLT)

Everything seems to be a battle. Nothing is easy. The fact is, life is difficult. So, why is life so hard in this world?

The Bible says rebellion against God broke everything.

It all started back with the first couple, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. When God created the world, everything was perfect. It was paradise. And Adam and Eve had no problems, suffering, sadness, temptations, or troubles.

But one day Adam and Eve decided that they wanted to do what they wanted to do. God told them, “You can do anything you want to in this paradise except one thing.” And what did Adam and Eve do? The one thing God told them not to do.

Why did he even give them a choice? Because without a choice, they couldn’t choose to love God. If you’re forced to love God, then it’s not real love.

Romans 5:12 says, *“Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it”* (GNT). Before sin, there was no death in the world. There was no sadness in the world. There was no sorrow. There was no difficulty in the world. People would not die. Adam and Eve could have lived forever as long as it was a perfect environment. It was only when everything got broken that sin brought death into the world.

Adam and Eve weren’t the only ones who made that choice. I’ve made it, you’ve made it, and everybody else in the world has made it. We have all said, “I don’t want to do the right thing; I want to do the easy thing.” We’ve all said, “I don’t want to say the truth; I want to say what’s convenient.” We’ve all said, “I don’t want to be what God wants me to be; I want to be what I want to be.” We’ve all done this.

We have all broken God’s laws. We have all rebelled by sins, transgressions, and iniquities. And that’s why nothing works correctly — your marriage, your health, your finances, your body, your relationships. Nothing works correctly, because sin broke everything.

When you understand why life in the world is so hard, you’re no longer going to be surprised by it. You’re not going to be surprised when things don’t go your way. You’re not going to be surprised when plans don’t pan out. You’re not going to be surprised when things actually go bad. And you will be able to handle the hard times of life much more easily.

So why is life so hard? Why do we suffer? Why is everything a battle? The answer is that rebellion against God broke everything.

Talk About It

- ◆ Think of a time when you followed your own way instead of God’s. What was the result?

COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS

An Encouraging Word Ministry

We all compare ourselves to others at times. We look at other women and ask ourselves, “Why can’t I be more like her?” So let me lean across the table and tell you today that you are exactly who you’re created to be.

Before you took your first breath, God placed gifts within you. He wove you together with strengths, abilities, and that smile of yours that lights up a room. He made you irreplaceable.

There’s one thing no other person in the world can do better than you, and that’s simply being you.

You are made in the image of God, and there’s a part of who he is that only shows up in this world through you. You may feel ordinary, but you’re anything but that, sweet girl. You are a masterpiece. A bit of the divine. Extraordinary.

When you let your heart receive that, believe it, live it, then you’re simply agreeing with God. That’s not pride. It’s actually the greatest humility to say, “Yes, God, I affirm that all you made is good—and that includes me too because of you.”

And not only did he form you before you were born, but he also made you a new creation when you gave your life to Jesus. Not simply a new person—a new creation.

In other words, a completely unique being. Here’s why that matters: if there’s only one of something, it can’t be compared. You’re not compared by God to anyone else, and that means you don’t have to compare yourself to others either. You’re accepted, cherished, and even celebrated just as you are.

Will you simply offer this world the gift of you today?

Psalm 139:1-4, 13-16

“ O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. ... For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

YOUR BELIEF UNLEASHES THE POWER OF GOD

Rick Warren — September 14, 2015

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” (Matthew 19:26 NIV)

Everything is possible with God.

We have a big God. People say, “Who do you think you are?” Wrong question. The question is, “Who do we think God is?” My God can do anything.

Jesus said, “According to your faith let it be done to you” (Matthew 9:29).

God wants to use you. He wants to bless you. He wants to do amazing things in your life. He wants you to be a world changer in your world. But he’s waiting for you to trust him. You need to stop saying, “I can’t.” “I can’t make this relationship work.” “I can’t do what God wants me to do.” That’s a lie! All things are possible with God.

Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes” (TLB). That’s why I push you through these devotionals, because I know you have enormous potential — far beyond what you ever imagined. God wants to use you, and according to your faith it will be done to you.

You know what the opposition to your faith is? It’s not other people. It’s not critics. It’s not even the devil. It’s your own unbelief. You are the biggest problem in your own life. Why don’t you believe God more? Why don’t you trust him more? It’s your choice. There are a lot of things you don’t have control over, but you can choose to believe God.

Do you want God to do big things in your life? Then start believing.

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible’” (Matthew 19:26 NIV).

Talk It Over

- ◆ What is something seemingly impossible that you want God to do in your life? Do you honestly believe he can do it?
- ◆ How does thanking God in advance show him your belief?
- ◆ What is an “I can’t” that you need to turn into a “God can”?

WHERE IS GOD IN MY STRUGGLE?

Rick Warren

“Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!” (Luke 24:31 NLT)

Ever feel like God is a million miles away? The truth is, he’s not. Whatever struggle you’re going through, you can rest assured you’re not alone. You have God in your corner.

But you’re not the only one who has ever wondered where God was during a struggle. On the very first Easter morning, right after Jesus’ Crucifixion, the disciples wondered the same thing. In Luke 24, we learn about one particular pair of these disciples who were walking down the road to Emmaus, talking about all that had transpired over the previous few days — Jesus’ arrest, beating, and Crucifixion — and trying to make sense of it all. They thought Jesus was the Messiah; their dream was crushed. They had heard reports that Jesus’ grave was empty. They were very confused.

Suddenly Jesus himself came alongside the disciples and joined them in their journey. Yet they were in so much grief, they didn’t notice him. Jesus asked about what they were discussing, and so the disciples let him in on the discussion. Jesus went on to share Old Testament passages that explained the events of the past few days.

That night, as they ate dinner with Jesus, the Bible says that *“Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!”* Luke 24:31 (NLT)

Imagine what that experience was like for these disciples. The guy they thought was God was crucified and dead. Then they hear he’s been resurrected, but they don’t believe it. Then a stranger walks along the road with them, eats with them, and suddenly they realize that it’s God himself! And then he disappears.

The disciples couldn’t see Jesus in their grief. They needed God to show himself to them.

You do, too. I don’t know what you’ve lost this year — whether it’s a loved one, your health, your job, a relationship, or a really big deal. But, if you’ve had a loss like that, you may have missed the fact that God has walked through the entire experience with you.

You were never, ever alone during that time. You couldn’t see him, but he was there.

Ask God to show himself to you. He wants you to see him. He wants you to know you were never alone.

Talk It Over

- ◆ How does God show his presence to you?
- ◆ How do you think grief blinds us to the ways that God is providing for us?

DEPRESSED?

Rick Warren — February 11, 2017

Are you down in the dumps? Do you need a mood elevator?

Put down the piece of chocolate cake. Don't have a pity party. Pick up your Bible instead.

You need a Word break.

God gave us the Bible to encourage us. One way you can think of the Bible is as a mood elevator.

The Bible says in Romans 15:4, *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope"* (NIV).

Everything in Scripture is written for our encouragement. That's a big statement — but it's true! Even the tough parts of God's Word are there to ultimately encourage our lives in the right direction.

That's why we need to spend time alone with God every single day. Whether it's your daily devotional, your quiet time, or your personal inspiration time, you need to be getting alone with God, reading his Word, and talking to him. The Bible says in Psalm 119:114: *"You're my place of quiet retreat; I wait for your Word to renew me"* (MSG).

If you're discouraged and have lost hope, I can tell you one thing about your life without ever meeting you: You're not spending time in God's Word. If you were, you wouldn't be discouraged. The more you read God's Word when you're down, the more he lifts you up. So the next time you feel discouraged, don't turn on the television. Instead, open up your Bible and *read it*. Listen to Dr. Luke instead of Dr. Phil.

God's Word has the power to change your life. It has God's power in it. Nothing else does. The Bible will give you the "real stuff" — true encouragement.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What things do you turn to when you feel discouraged? Do those things really offer you encouragement or give you hope?
- ◆ We can fit anything into our schedules if it's really important to us. Have you carved out a time in your day for "quiet retreat" so God can renew you?
- ◆ What are some Bible verses that encourage you when you're discouraged or down? Have you memorized them?

GOD LOVES YOU IN YOUR BROKENNESS

Rick Warren

***“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
(Psalm 34:18 NIV)***

In Genesis 32, Jacob had wrestled all night with a man, who was actually God. Genesis 32:27 says, *“The man asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘Jacob,’ he answered”* (NIV).

What a strange request. God obviously knew Jacob’s name. Whenever God asks you a question, it’s never for his benefit. He already knows the answer! The reason he asked this was that he wanted Jacob to admit what he was. In ancient times, names were chosen for their meaning, not for how nice they sounded. So you could be named after a profession like a baker or a carpenter or a smith. You could be named after a relative or you could be named for the situation you were in.

But at that time, parents mostly named their kids based on their character. When people said their name, they were telling someone what kind of person they were.

Jacob’s name means “deceiver.” And — oh boy — did he live up to his name! His entire life he lied to get out of many situations and one conflict after another because he was a deceiver. He was a manipulator. When God asked Jacob what his name was, he wanted him to own up to who he was.

Here’s the cool thing about it. When Jacob says, “I am Manipulator,” God was not shocked. He didn’t say, “You’ve got to be kidding me! I’m fighting with a manipulator? How did I miss that? I didn’t see that one coming.” God already knew everything bad about Jacob, just like he already knows everything bad about you — even the stuff you don’t know about yourself.

The Bible says in Malachi 1:2, *“I have loved Jacob.”* I like that verse because it gives me hope. If God loved Jacob who was so unlovable, who was such a manipulator, who was such a scoundrel, who was such a crook, who was such a liar — then God can love someone like me, too.

If you want lasting change in your life, you have to stop making excuses and rationalizing and blaming others for your brokenness. You have to be honest with God and with yourself and admit in humility, “I am the problem.”

How does God respond to our brokenness? The Bible says, *“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18).

Talk It Over

- ◆ What do you think God wants you to admit about yourself so that you can move forward in healing?
- ◆ Why is it so difficult to be honest with God, even when you know he already knows everything about you?
- ◆ What are the parts of yourself that you think are unlovable? Talk to God about those weaknesses today, and ask him for help to accept his unconditional love and let it change you.

LET JESUS LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

Rick Warren

I don't know what burden you're carrying. I don't know what's weighing you down. But I do know the answer.

Jesus says, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30 RSV).

For many years I never understood that verse, because I didn't know what a yoke was. When Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you," it sounded to me like he was going to give me something else to deal with. I've got a heavy enough burden, Lord. I don't need to take your problems on me.

A yoke is actually a board that has two arches in it that you put over two cattle so they can pull a cart.

The value of a yoke is that it halves the load. Without a yoke, one cow's got to pull that entire load by itself. But if you yoke up the cow with another cow, then the two cows pull the load together, and the load is half as heavy.

When Jesus says to take his yoke upon you, he's not saying he's going to give you his problems. Jesus doesn't have any problems! He's saying he's going to share your problem. He's going to share your load. He's going to take your stress on himself and bear it with you.

Wow!

He says three verbs in this verse: come, learn, and take. Jesus says, "Come to me. Team up with me. Then, learn how I do it. Take on a lighter load. This is going to reduce your stress. This is going to make it easier for you to navigate."

When you're yoked with Christ, you move together with him. You move in the same direction and at the same speed. And, you move in the right direction and at the right speed.

Talk It Over

- ◆ Why is it sometimes difficult to accept help from someone who wants to share your burdens and make it easier on you?
- ◆ Do you have people in your life who are willing to do that for you? How are you offering yourself to others to help reduce their stress?
- ◆ God already knows all about your stress. How will you show him that you are ready to take on his yoke?

HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOU'RE WORTH?

Rick Warren

“You are coming to Christ, the living stone who was rejected by humans but was chosen as precious by God.” (1 Peter 2:4 GW)

How much do you think you're worth? I'm not talking about your net worth; I'm talking about your self-worth. Don't ever confuse your valuables with your value as a person. You can be rich or poor, but it has nothing to do with your value as a person.

There are two things that determine value in life:

Value is what someone is willing to pay for something.

Value depends on who has owned something in the past.

Based on these two things, what's your value? Ask yourself, “Who owns me?” and “What was paid for me?” The Bible says, “*You have been bought and paid for by Christ, so you belong to him*” (1 Corinthians 7:23a LB).

You belong to God, and Jesus paid for you with his life. The cross proves your value.

Nobody has ever paid a greater ransom price than God paid for you! You're acceptable, and you're valuable.

Peter uses the imagery of a building project to illustrate our value. God is building this stone building that represents the Church, the family of God, and you're one of the stones. “*You are coming to Christ, the living stone who was rejected by humans but was chosen as precious by God*” (1 Peter 2:4 GW). Jesus is the living stone. He was perfect, but some people still rejected him. Some of you may think, “If I could just be perfect, then I would be accepted.” No! Jesus was perfect, but even he wasn't accepted by everyone. But, he was “chosen by God as valuable.”

God is building his Church, but it's not found in temples or church buildings. God lives in people, and you are his spiritual house. Peter says that you're a living stone. When you give your life to Christ, you become a building block in God's great plan.

Talk It Over

- ◆ How should understanding a Christian's value in God's eyes change the way you treat yourself and other believers?
- ◆ What does this mean to you: Don't ever confuse your valuables with your value as a person.
- ◆ Meditate on this truth: The cross of Jesus Christ proves your value.

GOD WANTS TO GIVE YOU FREEDOM

Rick Warren

“If the Son sets you free, then you will be really free.” (John 8:36 TEV)

The world defines freedom as a life without any restraint — “I can do anything I want to do and say anything I want to say without anybody telling me what to do.” You may burn everybody else, but you get to do it your own way. The world says you can have your freedom, but only by being totally selfish.

Yet, the Bible says the only way to true freedom is through Jesus: *“If the Son sets you free, then you will be really free”* (John 8:36 TEV).

Real freedom is freedom from fear, guilt, worry, bitterness, and death. You’re free to quit pretending because you’re free to be yourself.

How do you get rid of those kinds of fears? By letting God love you! The apostle John teaches that *“there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear”* (1 John 4:18a NIV).

When you realize how much God loves you, you’ll begin to live in true freedom. In fact, you worship God when you recognize that *“God is love.” It is an act of worship to agree that he is a loving, caring, generous God and that we can “rely on the love God has for us”* (1 John 4:16).

Talk It Over

- ◆ What will you have to give up in your life to experience freedom through Jesus Christ?
- ◆ What will you gain through freedom in Jesus Christ? What will change about your relationships? Your attitude? Your future?